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ABSTRACT

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), as part of its regular operations, monitors client satisfaction, and seeks to sustain a process of informed decision making in the development and delivery of products and services. This report documents client satisfaction with McREL services as determined by participant evaluations. These evaluations were collected at the conclusion of workshops, conferences, or consultant/technical assistance provided by McREL staff. The report does not include data not collected systematically, such as feedback to staff or thank-you letters. A total of 60 workshops and presentations were considered as data sources, and, of these, 32 events aligned with the client satisfaction study aims. The evaluations after these events indicate that clients have been very satisfied with the services they received from McREL staff. The grand mean of the 6 dimensions of client satisfaction was 3.47 on a 4-point scale, about the same as in 1998, indicating that McREL provided high quality services, and was consistent in the delivery of those services. (SLD)

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CLIENT SATISFACTION:

A SYNTHESIS FOR THE YEAR 1999

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A SYNTHESIS FOR THE YEAR 1999

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INTRODUCTION

McREL, as part of its regular operations, monitors client satisfaction in a variety of ways and seeks to sustain a process of informed decision making in the development and delivery of products and services. This is a second report documenting client satisfaction with McREL services as determined by participant evaluations. In our 1998 report, we noted that attentiveness to documenting client satisfaction in the non-profit sector has been increasing in recent years. It has been a regular concern at McREL with individual event reports prepared and circulated to the McREL technical assistance staff provider as well as management. The 1998 report stated:

> "Certainly one aspect of being entrusted with public funds includes delivering products and services that are of the highest quality; responding to client needs, and providing services and products of direct use to clients and their colleagues" (McREL 1999).

The periodic examination of client satisfaction is one way McREL meets this obligation. This report compiles the results of one form of systematic data collection for 1999: participant evaluations collected at the conclusion of workshops, conferences, or consultation/technical assistance provided by McREL staff. This report does not include non-systematically collected data such as oral or written feedback to individual staff, unsolicited feedback received through the McREL web site, written testimonials or thank you letters, and measures of product sales or requests for services. Given the non-representative nature of this latter type of data and the likely bias towards stronger favorable or unfavorable responses by those more motivated to contact McREL, these data are seen as less reliable and are not included in this report.

METHODS

This section addresses three aspects of the study method: definition, unit of analysis, sampling and data collection.

Definition of Client Satisfaction

The definition of client satisfaction used in this report is the same as that used for the 1998 report. Love (1991) suggests that client satisfaction can be measured across three dimensions: "(a) the extent to which the service or product has met the consumer's perceived needs, (b) overall consumer satisfaction with the service or product, and (c) whether the consumer would use the service or product again (p. 77)."

Working from Love's three dimensions of client satisfaction, McREL has identified seven subdimensions, which are addressed by the items used for evaluation:

(a) meeting the consumers needs – the subdimension *enhanced understanding* is defined;

(b) overall satisfaction – four subdimensions (*material quality, presentation quality, amount of information,* and *overall quality*) are defined; and

(c) whether the client would use the service again – two subdimensions (*intend to use* and *share with others*) are defined.

Individual items from specific event evaluation instruments can be aligned with each of the seven subdimensions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Specifications for Client Satisfaction

Dimension of Client Satisfaction	**Subdimensions**	**Example of Item from McREL Survey**
Meeting consumer needs	Enhanced Understanding	*These workshops enhanced my understanding about the readiness and model selection process.* (Extremely [1] to Not at All [4])
Overall satisfaction	Material Quality	*The workshop materials were...* (Excellent [1] to Poor [4])
	Presentation Quality	*The workshop presentations and activities were...* (Excellent [1] to Poor [4])
	Amount of Information	*Given the duration of this workshop, the amount of information was...* (Too much [1], About Right [2], Too Little [3])
	Overall Quality	*Overall, this workshop was...* (Excellent [1] to Poor [4]).
Whether the client would use the service again	Intend to use (the new information/skills)	*I expect to use the information and skills acquired during these workshops in my work.* (Extensively [1] to Not at All [4])
	Intend to share (the new information/skills)	*I expect to share this information with my colleagues.* (Extensively [1] to Not at All [4])

Unit of Analysis

The unweighted mean of means was calculated to describe each subdimension of client satisfaction. The unweighted mean was selected since the event is the unit of analysis and participants are nested in events. Responses to items are measured on a four-point scale with 4.0 being most favorable and 1.0 being most unfavorable. For one event, a five-point scale was initially used, but the results were recalculated to reflect a four-point scale for comparative consistency across the entire data set.

Sampling and Data Collection

A total of 60 workshops and presentations conducted by McREL under the REL contract in fiscal year 1999 were considered as data sources for this report. Of these, evaluation data from 32 events aligned with the client satisfaction definition given above. Table 2 lists the 32 events that served as data sources for this study. As shown in the table, the events occurred throughout the entire year and ranged from small (6 participants) to large (171 participants). For each event, the McREL staff member providing the service, in conjunction with a member of the McREL evaluation team, developed and administered an evaluation form based on a consistent format and core set of items.

Table 2
FY 1999 Events

Report Title	Date	# of Participants
Comprehensive School Reform: Examining the School Readiness Process and Model Selection Process, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	October 1998	156
Reading in the Content Area	October 2, 1998	35
Southwest Comprehensive Technical Assistance Center: Survey of Colorado Clients	November 9, 1998	137
Systems Thinking Systems Changing - Upton, WY	January 15, 1999	34
Dimensions of Learning	February 12, 1999	80
McREL's Third Annual Dialogue Group Session, "The World Café", facilitated by M. Kellnor-Rogers	February 17-19, 1999	30
Transforming Schoolwides: A Step toward Comprehensive School Reform	February 17, 1999	30
Planning Process for School Success, Excellence in Education Conference	April 21, 1999	11

Table 2 (cont'd)
FY 1999 Events

Report Title	Date	# of Participants
Planning Meeting for Diversity Roundtable	April 28, 1999	8
McREL's Cross-Site Research Meeting with District and University Research Partners	June 3-4, 1999	14
LNP Curriculum, Learning and Instruction (CLI) Project: Collaborative Process Evaluation for Project Self-Monitoring and Improvement	June 10-11, 1999	12
Symposium on Capacity Building	June 23-25, 1999	18
CSRD Network Forum	July 27, 1999	29
Weston County School District #7	August 23, 1999	40
Systems Thinking/Systems Changing - Sundance, WY	August 24, 1999	101
Dimensions of Learning - Flandreau, SD	August 24-25, 1999	100
McREL All-Staff Retreat	August 26, 1999	88
Regional Field Services Meeting	September 8, 1999	6
Partners Meeting	September 14, 1999	25
Curriculum Learning and Instruction (CLI) Project Team Meeting - Portland, OR	September 27, 1999	9
CSRD Regional Meeting	October 4-7, 1999	171
6+1 Writing Assessment Workshop	October 7-8, 1999	24
McREL Policy Forum	October 11, 1999	28
McREL Fall Conference, Pre-session 1	October 13, 1999	17
McREL Fall Conference, Pre-session 2	October 13, 1999	39
McREL Fall Conference, Pre-session 3	October 13, 1999	21
McREL Fall Conference, Pre-session 4	October 13, 1999	17
McREL Fall Conference	October 13, 1999	170
South Dakota CSRD Proposal Planning	October 27, 1999	15
McREL Diversity Roundtable on At-Risk Student Populations	November 11, 1999	31
Performance Indicators/Family Literacy	November 13, 1999	15
CSRD LEA Roundtable	December 2, 1999	27

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FINDINGS

1999 Client Satisfaction Results

Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics for each measure of client satisfaction taken in 1999. Event evaluations are developed jointly between the program presenters and the evaluators to best serve the data needs of program improvement as well as overall McREL monitoring of quality. As a result not all items reflecting client satisfaction appear on all 32 event evaluation instruments; Table 3 also shows the number of samples (events) available for each item.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics by Subdimension

	Event Ratings				
Client Satisfaction Subdimension	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Enhanced Understanding	16	2.86	3.73	3.39	0.27
Materials Quality	25	3.19	3.85	3.54	0.20
Presentation Quality	22	2.85	3.88	3.42	0.27
Overall Quality	31	2.94	4.0	3.52	0.24
Intended Use	27	2.68	3.87	3.44	0.25
Share with Others	24	2.92	3.80	3.48	0.23
Amount of Information*	19	1.70	2.20	2.03	0.12

**This item was based on a three-point scale where 1 = Too Much Information, 2 = About the Right Amount of Information, and 3 = Too Little Information.*

The overall mean client satisfaction for the 32 events conducted by McREL in 1999 was 3.47 with a standard deviation of 0.24. This figure does not include the ratings for "*amount of information*" item since it is based on a three-point scale.

Figure 1 provides the means of the 1999 client satisfaction items with their associated 95% confidence intervals. The overlapping confidence intervals indicate there is no statistically significant difference among the means. In general, across all six subdimensions of client satisfaction, clients rate McREL events essentially the same.

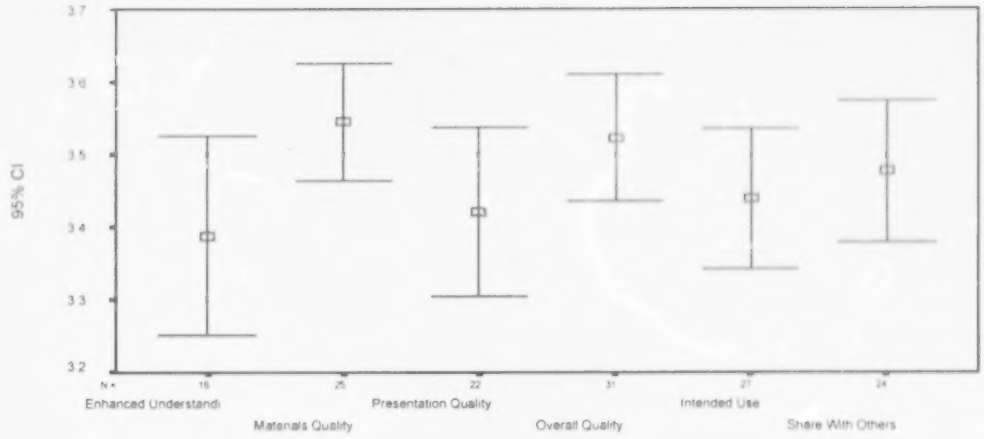

Figure 1. Means and 95% confidence intervals for client satisfaction items.

Comparison of 1998 and 1999 Client Satisfaction

Table 4 compares the descriptive statistics from the 1998 and 1999 client satisfaction reports.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics Comparing Six[1] Client Satisfaction Subdimensions
from 1998 and 1999 Data

	1998			1999		
Subdimension	**n**	**Mean**	**95% CI**	**n**	**Mean**	**95% CI**
Enhanced Understanding	17	3.41	3.26/3.56	15	3.39	3.24/3.54
Materials Quality	16	3.54	3.39/3.70	25	3.54	3.46/3.62
Presentation Quality	21	3.43	3.30/3.57	21	3.42	3.29/3.55
Overall Quality	16	3.51	3.36/3.66	31	3.52	3.43/3.61
Intended Use	16	3.34	3.15/3.53	26	3.44	3.34/3.54
Share with Others	15	3.34	3.19/3.49	24	3.48	2.49/4.47

[1]*The "Amount of Information" item is excluded in this comparison. In 1998, "Amount of Information" was recorded as a percentage of those responding "about the right amount of information." In 1999, the item was measured as an arithmetic mean on the same 1-3 point scale described in Table 3.*

Ratings in 1999 showed improvements in *material quality*, and whether clients would share what they learned with colleagues (*share with others*), while slight drops in *enhanced understanding* and *presentation quality* were recorded. In 1998 the mean of all six subdimensions was 3.43; in 1999 that mean rose slightly to 3.47. In all cases, however, these observed differences are not statistically significant.

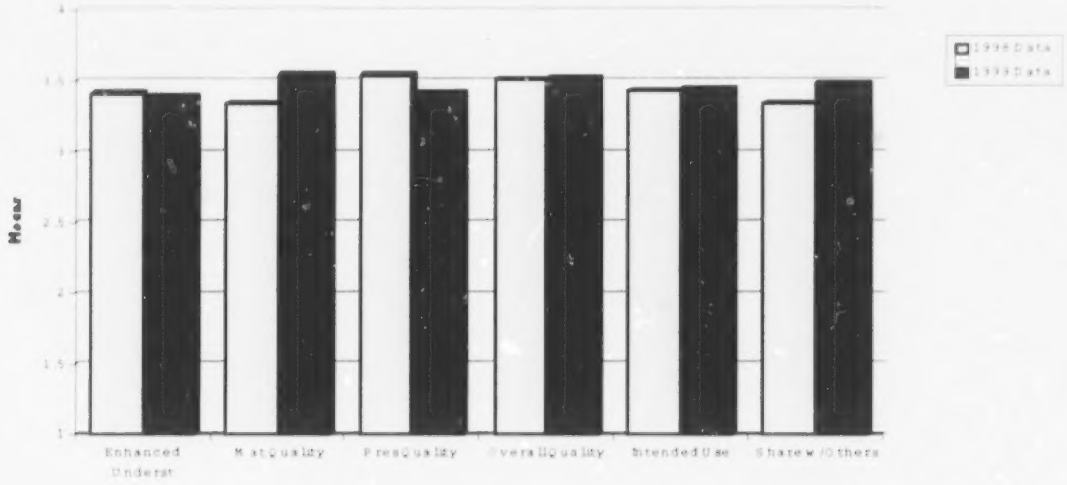

Figure 2. Comparison of means for six 1998 and 1999 client satisfaction subdimensions.

CONCLUSIONS

As one of several sources of client satisfaction utilized by McREL, the evaluations of 1999 events indicate that clients have been very satisfied with the services they received from McREL staff. In 1999 the grand mean of the six subdimensions of client satisfaction was 3.47 on a four-point scale, which was about the same as in 1998. In addition to providing high quality services in 1999, McREL was consistent in the delivery of those services as means across the events were not significantly different.

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